CLAIMS

1. A method for integrating point of sale (POS) data with electronic article surveillance (EAS) data, comprising:

    providing a general purpose computer operable to receive and process data;

    receiving POS data at the general purpose computer;

5   receiving EAS data at the general purpose computer; and

    processing the POS data with the EAS data at the general purpose computer.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the general-purpose computer includes a vending database for storing vending data and the method further comprises storing the POS data as a first portion of the vending data in the vending database.

3. The method of claim 2, further comprising storing the EAS data as a second portion of the vending data in the vending database.

4. The method of claim 3, further comprising selecting a subset portion of the vending data comprising selected data from the POS data and the EAS data in accordance with a predetermined selection criterion.

5. The method of claim 4, further comprising reporting the selected subset portion of the vending data in a predetermined format.

6. The method of claim 5, wherein the selected subset portion of the vending data is reported to a reporting device, and the selected subset portion provides system health information.

7. The method of claim 1, wherein the POS data comprises merchandise data.

8. The method of claim 7, wherein the EAS data comprises alarm event data.

9. The method of claim 8, wherein the merchandise data is associated with an article of merchandise, and the method further comprises:

    electronically identifying the merchandise data associated with the article of

merchandise; and

 providing the merchandise data to the general purpose computer.

10. The method of claim 9, wherein electronically identifying the merchandise data includes scanning the article of merchandise in conjunction with a sale of the article of merchandise.

11. The method of claim 10, further comprising deactivating an EAS tag associated with the article of merchandise, wherein the POS data includes deactivation data based on deactivating the EAS tag.

12. The method of claim 1, further comprising receiving an alarm event at an EAS device, the alarm event corresponding to an activated EAS tag, wherein the EAS data includes alarm information based upon the activated EAS tag.

13. A security management method, comprising:

 receiving an alarm at an electronic article surveillance (EAS) device;

 initiating a timer in response to receiving the alarm;

 stopping the timer in response to input from a user;

5 obtaining alarm event information at the EAS device, the alarm event information being based on the alarm; and

 transmitting the alarm event information from the EAS device to a general purpose computer.

14. The method of claim 13, wherein the alarm corresponds to an activated EAS tag associated with an article of merchandise.

15. The method of claim 13, wherein the timer identifies the response time to the alarm, and the timer is used to correlate video information with at least one of EAS data and point of sale data.

16. The method of claim 13, wherein the alarm event information includes at least one of responder information, salesperson identification, receipt identification, location

identification, POS identification, product information, a public relations code and a reason code.

17. The method of claim 16, wherein the public relations code is based on a user-defined public relations code identifier.

18. The method of claim 16, wherein the reason code is selected from the group comprising of failure to deactivate, failure to remove, recovery, related to last alarm, runaway, stock movement, system test, tags in area, unexplained, unattended, incoming item, other, and at least one user-defined reason code.

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19. The method of claim 13, wherein the EAS device comprises a scanner, and obtaining the alarm event information comprises scanning a UPC code of an article of merchandise associated with triggering the alarm.

20. The method of claim 19, further comprising scanning a receipt from a POS device to obtain merchandise information.

21. The method of claim 20, further comprising associating the merchandise information with the alarm event information.

22. A system for integrating point of sale (POS) data and electronic article surveillance (EAS) data, the system comprising:

a vending database operable to store the POS data and the EAS data; and

a general purpose computer in operative communication with the vending
5 database, the general purpose computer being operable to receive and process the POS data and the EAS data.

23. The system of claim 22, wherein the POS data is stored as a POS portion of vending data.

24. The system of claim 22, wherein the EAS data is stored as an EAS portion of vending data.

25. The system of claim 24, wherein the POS data is stored as a POS portion of the vending data.

26. The system of claim 25, wherein the general purpose computer is operable to select a subset portion of the vending data from the vending database in accordance with a predetermined selection criterion, the subset portion comprising data from the POS portion and the EAS portion.

27. The system of claim 22, further comprising a POS device capable of use in connection with sales, the POS device being operable to obtain product information about an article of merchandise.

28. The system of claim 27, wherein the POS device is further operable to deactivate an EAS tag associated with the article of merchandise.

29. The system of claim 28, wherein the POS device is further operable to obtain EAS tag information upon deactivation of the EAS tag.

30. The system of claim 29, wherein the POS device is further operable to generate the POS data, based on the product information and the EAS tag information.

31. The system of claim 22, further comprising an EAS device operable to receive an alarm event corresponding to an activated EAS tag.

32. The system of claim 31, wherein the EAS device is further operable to generate the EAS data based upon the alarm event.

33. The system of claim 31, further comprising a detector for detecting a signal from the activated EAS tag and generating the alarm event.

34. The system of claim 33, wherein the EAS device is operable to control the detector.

35. The system of claim 31, wherein the EAS device comprises an alarm event logging unit (ALU) having a security management program and a memory for storing the security management program, wherein the security management program is operable to receive the alarm event, to obtain alarm event information and to generate the EAS data based upon the alarm event and the alarm event information.

36. The system of claim 35, wherein the alarm event information comprises at least one of responder information, salesperson identification, receipt identification, location identification, POS identification, product information, a public relations code and a reason code.

37. The system of claim 36, wherein the public relations code is based on a user-defined public relations code identifier.

38. The system of claim 36, wherein the reason code is selected from the group of reasons comprising failure to deactivate, failure to remove, recovery, related to last alarm, runaway, stock movement, system test, EAS tags in area, unexplained, unattended, incoming item, other, and at least one user-defined reason code.

39. The system of claim 35, wherein the ALU further comprises a keypad for inputting the alarm event information.

40. The system of claim 35, wherein the ALU further comprises a scanner for inputting the alarm event information.

41. The system of claim 35, wherein the security management program comprises a user-programmable interface.

42. The system of claim 31, wherein the EAS device is connected to the general purpose computer through a wireless network.

43. The system of claim 31, wherein the EAS device is connected to the general purpose computer through a wired network.

44. The system of claim 31, further comprising a reporting module operable to provide EAS system diagnostics based on the EAS data.

45. An alarm-event logging unit (ALU), comprising:

a processor operable to execute instructions of a security management program;

a memory for storing the security management program; and

an input operable to receive an alarm event corresponding to an activated EAS tag, wherein the security management program performs actions upon receipt of the alarm event by the input.

46. The ALU of claim 45, wherein the actions include obtaining alarm event information and generating electronic article surveillance (EAS) data based upon the alarm event and the alarm event information.

47. The ALU of claim 46, wherein, prior to obtaining the alarm event information, the actions further include initiating a timer in response to receiving the alarm event and stopping the timer in response to input from a user.

48. The ALU of claim 46, wherein the actions further comprise transmitting the alarm event information from the ALU to a general-purpose computer.

49. The ALU of claim 46, wherein the alarm event information comprises at least one of responder information, salesperson identification, receipt identification, location identification, POS identification, product information, a public relations code and a reason code.

50. The ALU of claim 49, wherein the public relations code is based on a user-defined public relations code identifier.

51. The ALU of claim 49, wherein the reason code is selected from the group comprising failure to deactivate, failure to remove, recovery, related to last alarm event, runaway, stock movement, system test, EAS tags in area, unexplained, unattended, incoming item, other, and at least one user-defined reason code.

52. The ALU of claim 46, wherein the security management program is operable to associate purchase information from a point of sale (POS) device with the alarm event information.

53. The ALU of claim 45, further comprising a keypad for inputting alarm event information.

54. The ALU of claim 45, further comprising a scanner for inputting alarm event information.

55. The ALU of claim 45, wherein the processor is operable to generate an alarm time stamp based upon the alarm event.

56. The ALU of claim 55, wherein the alarm time stamp is used to correlate video information with at least one of electronic article surveillance data and point of sale data.